

WOOTTON ACADEMY TRUST

Tuesday 17 March 2020

Dear Parents/Carers

Re: Coronavirus – Update

First of all, thank you for your continued support and keeping us informed when you have been forced to take the decision to self-isolate your family. Thank you too for the appreciative comments in respect of how the Trust is seeking to keep you informed, as well as the questions you would like answers to, when possible.

Attendance at the school and college is, as you would expect, lower than normal. Today attendance was as follows:

Year 9 **76%** Year 10 **75%** Year 11 **79%** Year 12 **68%** Year 13 **58%**

Attendance of staff is **94%**

We know that student attendance is unlikely to increase over the coming days and weeks given that families are self-isolating for up to fourteen days. We know that next week, the attendance of a small number of staff with medical conditions will result in staff attendance falling further, once the NHS issues individual advice to them on what they must do.

Students are being *overwhelmingly* sensible in washing hands, putting litter in bins and following Public Health England guidance as well as school and college advice. Clearly, the lower numbers at school and the college are aiding social distancing. We mentioned yesterday that we have cancelled some events, including large group gatherings, e.g. school assemblies. Today, we have asked that classroom doors and windows should be open as much as possible to aid ventilation.

We have decided that whilst the Library will remain open as a learning resource during lessons, it will be closed before school, at morning break and at lunchtime, due to the very large numbers of students who tend to congregate making social distancing impossible. The Library will not be open after school either due to staff availability.

Today, we have reviewed how we best support students when, as is inevitable, schools and colleges are told to close. In particular, we are looking at how children entitled to Free School Meals can still access this help. Across Wootton Upper School and Kimberley College around 100 students access free school meals. We are talking to other schools about what they are planning to do, and also to our Local Authorities.

We are also considering how we can best support children and families who may need to talk to us about safeguarding concerns. We understand that some families are likely to face real financial hardship if parents cannot work, either because they are looking after young children, or through the closure of much of the service industry, and other industries.

We will give you more information about our plans by the end of this week, if possible.

Every student is being asked to send an email from their personal school email account – *some learners hardly use their email accounts*; this will mean we have a safe way to communicate with students when we are closed. If your child was not in school today and has an issue accessing their school email account, then please send an email on their behalf to it@wootton.beds.sch.uk and passwords can be reset.

Show My Homework (the online learning platform) is the main method used by teachers to set work for students. Please make sure your child has access to this.

We have not received any information yet on what arrangements will be in place for public examinations at GCSE, BTEC and A Level. There was a suggestion in the press today that some examinations could be delayed until September. In reality, nobody knows how long it is going to take for Coronavirus to pass.

We are aware of Imperial College's research shared with the government last week, which has led to the change of strategy, away from mitigation to suppression of the virus. Like me, you will have seen the astonishingly high number of deaths that research suggested without a change of strategy. This must have had the same profound effect on you as it did on me when I read it.

Each of us are about to embark on a period in our lives, the like of which, very few will have lived through before. Today, the Prime Minister, in his press conference, used phrases such as the need for the country to be on a war footing, if Coronavirus is going to be overcome.

Many of us are fearful because we are not sure what lies ahead.

Each of us is thinking about what is the right thing to do for our own families, as well as thinking about others in our communities who are vulnerable.

Yours sincerely

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Wootton Academy Trust

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